

ONCFS - Tour du Valat Activities

in the framework of the RESSOURCE project

Achievements (winter 2017-2018)



March 2018

The RESSOURCE project focuses on wetlands and is coordinated by FAO. It aims to conserve waterbirds as “resources” in the Sahel, mainly in the framework of the AEWA and the Ramsar Convention.

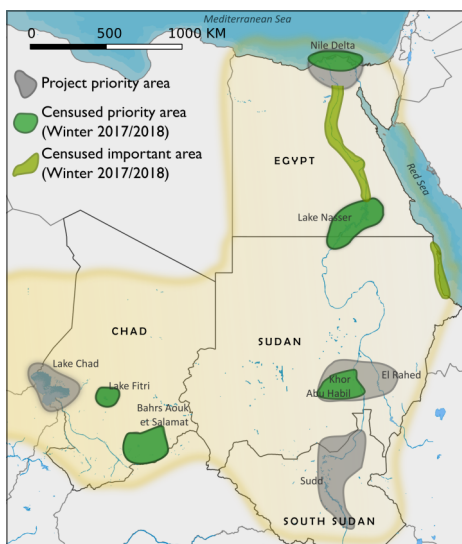
Its actions concern five different components:

1. Waterbird monitoring (International Waterbird Census, IWC),
2. Conservation of waterbirds and their habitats,
3. Utilisation of waterbirds,
4. Capacity building,
5. Strengthening legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks.

The French National Agency for wildlife and hunting management (ONCFS-France) coordinates component 1 with the assistance of the AEWA's African Initiative Technical Support Unit (Tour du Valat TSU/ONCFS) for managing data and developing a GIS.

Component 2 aims to support conservation actions in some targeted wetlands. ONCFS also conducts activities in components 2 and 4.

The CIRAD (The French agricultural research and international cooperation organization) and its partners are in charge of the socio-economic monitoring conducted within the scope of component 3. OMPO (an NGO promoting the conservation of Migratory Birds of the Western Palearctic) is in charge of activities which will be conducted in the delta of Senegal within components 1, 2, and 4. Component 5 will be implemented by FAO.



To learn more about the
RESSOURCE project:

[FAO](#)

As in the winter of 2016-17, ONCFS and Tour du Valat provided support for IWCs in the Sahel and in Egypt in the field and for data management and processing.

The initial results of components 1, 2, and 4 in the framework of the missions conducted this winter by the TSU (ONCFS/TdV) are presented in the following pages.

Location of intervention areas
winter 2017-2018

Censuses in Egypt, December 2017

Winter 2017-2018: good IWC coverage in Egypt

The team of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) was assisted by ONCFS for the censuses on two large lakes in the Nile delta (Lake Manzala and Lake Burullus), as well as part of Lake Nasser.

More than 30,000 birds were counted at Lake Burullus and more than 80,000 at Lake Manzala. Even if these figures are significant, they are much lower than the numbers observed in the 1980s and 90s (several hundreds of thousands).

The EEAA from Aswan also counted waterbirds from boats on the entire course of the Nile River from Aswan to Cairo.

In January 2018, censuses were also conducted by a third team at the two lakes in the Wadi El Rayan in the Fayoum governorate.



IWC coverage for the winter of 2017/2018 is probably the most complete for Egypt since the 1990s. A particular effort was made to map sites and improve the census protocols so that valid comparisons can be made in the future, and also to facilitate the work of the Egyptian network of waterbirds observers. IWC data for the winter of 2017/2018 will be integrated into the Egyptian and international databases.

Counting and training in Chad, January 2018

Waterbird censuses were conducted in mid-January in two Ramsar wetlands in Chad in cooperation with the Chadian Directorate for the conservation of wildlife and protected areas (DCFAP) and the NGO African Parks, at the same time as training sessions were run in the field.

Censuses in the Bahr Aouk and Salamat floodplains

For the second consecutive year, waterbirds in the Barh Aouk and Salamat floodplains, one of the largest Ramsar sites in the world, were counted by airplane and on the ground.



A Tour du Valat ornithologist, Yves Kayser, provided support for the aerial counts during which waterbirds were sampled along 3 000 km of transects using the distance sampling method.

The number of waterbirds can then be estimated through modelling.

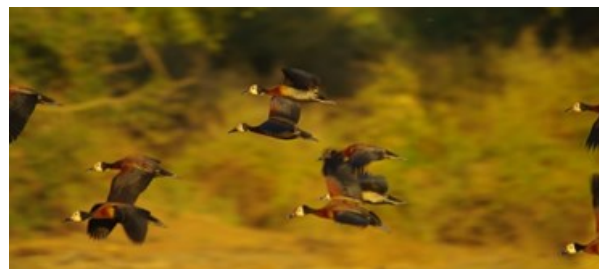
In the Zakouma National Park (ZNP), which is part of the Ramsar site, more than 60,000 birds were counted from the ground. The double observer count method (aerial count) will enable us to refine the estimates of the number of waterbirds in this wetland complex, which appears again to be of international importance.



Waterbirds census on Lake Fitri

Two aerial protocols and one nautical protocol were tested on this lake, which will enable us to improve and refine the population size estimates for those species correctly detected by the two methods. 25,000 birds were counted by boat on Lake Fitri. This bird census work received logistical support from the Yao-Fitri Sultanate.

The initial results confirm that these zones are of international importance: the ZNP is home to over 20% of the East African population of the Black Crowned Crane - *Balearica pavonina* (species listed as VU).



Meanwhile, Lake Fitri supports 2% of the West African populations of the White-Faced Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) and the Grey-Headed Gull (*Larus cirrhocephalus*), as well as 2% of the Sahel population of the Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*).

Waterbird identification and counting training

17 days of theoretical and practical training on waterbird identification and monitoring were given by ONCFS in the field for observers of the Chadian waterbirds monitoring network (DCFAP, Lake Chad Basin Commission, and African Parks).

Bird counts and training in Sudan, February 2018

Khor Abu Habil: an unknown wetlands complex

ONCFS and its Sudanese partners (Wildlife Conservation General Administration, Sudanese Wildlife Society and Sennar University) worked together to conduct IWC in Sudan.

Based on its experience in the field in Sudan from 2010 to 2014, the TSU had in advance combined its field data with maps of the flooded zones, which it obtained by processing satellite images acquired a few weeks before the field mission.

The zones predicted to be the most important for waterbirds could thus be immediately targeted and easily reached. Likewise, 10% of the Central & Southeast Europe/Mediterranean & tropical Africa population of the Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) were observed in this zone which appears to meet Ramsar criterion for international importance for waterbirds (cf box on following page).

Training in Arabic for trainers and university professors from Sudan

The Sudanese partners from Wildlife Conservation General Administration (WCGA), the NGO Sudanese Wildlife Society (SWS), and various universities (Bahri, Sudan, Sennar) benefited this year from training in Arabic on waterbird identification and monitoring. The goal of this training is to include this educational module (© [Hirundo FT2E & ONCFS](#)) on waterbird identification and monitoring in Sudanese university programmes on wildlife management and conservation.

This training in the class room and in the field received additional financial support from the [Fondation François Sommer](#). It was given by Hichem Azafzaf from the Association “Les Amis des Oiseaux” (AAO - BirdLife Tunisia), a key partner in the TSU’s North African projects ([MedWaterbirdsNetwork](#)), particularly for the development of training tools in Arabic



Census on the Red Sea shore

As requested by the WCGA, a joint waterbird census was conducted on the shore of the Red Sea. The numerous salt pans and lagoons along the coast would seem to suggest a highly dense waterbird population in this region.

However, despite the vast expanses of natural habitats that are rather well conserved and seem in good ecological condition, the number of waterbirds counted proved to be rather low.

Although it is obviously impossible to draw conclusions from a single census, this region, which is extremely rich in marine biodiversity, seems to be more important for birds as a breeding site rather than as a wintering site.

Khor Abu Habil

-An interior alluvial delta -

The administrations and organisations interested in developing studies in the Khor Abu Habil wetlands alluvial fan gathered for a workshop in Khartoum in February 2018. This wetlands of a rare type may also qualify as a [RAMSAR site](#) because of its potential international importance for waterbirds and local populations.

Within this framework, the WCGA and the CI-RAD have undertaken socio-economic surveys on the utilisation of waterbirds.

A Sudanese student has started a doctoral thesis on hydrology and soil science, which will be jointly supervised by the University of Bayreuth in Germany and the University of Khartoum. This thesis should receive funding from component 2 of the RESSOURCE project.

Written by Tour du Valat and ONCFS

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Translation: Charles La Via

Activities co-funded by:



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